PREACHER AND PRAYER

E. M. Bounds

Washington, Ga.

Three things make a divine- prayer, meditation, and temptation -- Luther

If you do not pray, God will probably lay you aside from your ministry as he did me to teach you to pray. Remember Luther's maxim. "To have prayed well is to have studied well. Get your text from God, your thoughts, your words -- McCheyne.

PRAYER SERIES

Nashville, Tenn.; Dallas, Tex.

Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South

Smith & Lamar, agents

1907

A minister's recreation must be limited to what is needed for his work, like mowing the lawn. May a physician in plague time take any more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death? Will you stand by and watch sinners die, saying, "God does not require me to make myself a drudge to save them! "Is this the voice of ministerial or Christian compassion or instead of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty? - Richard Baxter

Misemployment of time is injurious to the mind. During my illness, I reflected with self-reproach on days spent in my study: I was reading history, poetry, and my monthly journals, but I was in my study! Another man's trifling is notorious to all observers, but what am I doing? Nothing, perhaps, that has a reference to the spiritual good of my congregation. Spend a lot of time in prayer and in retirement. Study the honor and glory of your Master, - Richard Cecil.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....3
Chapter 2.....8
Chapter 3.....11
Chapter 4.....15
Chapter 5.....19
Chapter 6.....23
Chapter 7.....26
Chapter 8.....30
Chapter 9.....33
Chapter 10.....35
Chapter 11.....39
Chapter 12.....43
Chapter 13.....47
Chapter 14.....50
Chapter 15.....53
Chapter 16.....57
Chapter 17.....61
Chapter 18.....65
Chapter 19.....69
Chapter 20.....73

Chapter 1

> *Study the universal holiness of life. Your usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last only an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. If Satan can only make a covetous minister a lover of praise, pleasure, and good eating, he has ruined your ministry. Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, thoughts, and words from God. Luther spent his best three hours in prayer - Robert Murray McCheyne.*

We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, and new organizations to advance the Church and secure its enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day tends to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's objective is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. "There was a man from God whose name was John." The dispensation that heralded and prepared the way for Christ was bound up with that man, John. "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." That cradled Son is the source of the world's salvation. When Paul appeals to the personal character of the men who rooted the gospel in the world, he solves the mystery of their success. The glory and efficiency of the gospel are staked on the men who proclaim it. When God declares that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of them whose hearts are perfect toward him," he declares the necessity of men and his dependence on them as a channel through which to exert his power upon the world. This vital, urgent truth is one that this age of machinery is apt to forget. The forgetting of it is as detrimental to the work of God as would

be the striking of the sun from his sphere. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.

What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better machinery, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use-men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods but through men. He does not come on machinery but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men-men of prayer.

An eminent historian has said that the accidents of personal character have more to do with the revolutions of nations than either philosophical historians or democratic politicians will allow. This is most true when it comes to the gospel of Christ and the way Christ's followers live and act, which is to "Christianize the world" and change both nations and people. Of the preachers of the gospel, it is eminently true.

The character as well as the fortunes of the gospel are committed to the preacher. He makes or mars the message from God to man. The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must not only be golden but also open and flawless so that the oil may have a full, unhindered, unwasted flow.

The man makes the preacher. God must make the man. The messenger is, if possible, more important than the message. The preacher is more than the sermon. The preacher makes the sermon. All the preacher says is tinctured, impregnated, by what the preacher is, just as the life-giving milk from the mother's bosom is only the mother's life. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and the taste of the vessel impregnates it and may cause it to discolor. The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not a one-hour performance. It is the outflow of a life. It takes twenty years to make a sermon because it takes twenty years to make a man. The true sermon is a thing of life. The sermon grows because the man grows. The sermon is forceful because the man is forceful.

The sermon is holy because the man is holy. The sermon is full of divine unction because the man is full of divine unction.

Paul termed it "my gospel," not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, but that the gospel had been put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Pau's sermons-what were they? Where are they? Skeletons and fragments adrift on the sea of creativity! But the man Paul, more significant than his sermons, lives forever, in complete form, feature, and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. Preaching is just a voice. The voice in silence dies; the text is forgotten; the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives.

The sermon's life-giving forces cannot rise above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher. Under the Jewish dispensation, the high priest had inscribed in jeweled letters on a golden frontlet: "Holiness to the Lord." So every preacher in Christ's ministry must be molded into and mastered by this same holy motto. It is a crying shame for the Christian ministry to fall lower in holiness of character and holiness of aim than the Jewish priesthood. Jonathan Edwards said, "I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ." "The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness." The gospel of Christ does not move with popular waves. It has no self-propagating power. It moves as the men who have charge of it move. The preacher must impersonate the gospel. Its divine, most distinctive features must be embodied in him.

The constraining power of love must be in the preacher as a projecting, eccentric, all-commanding, and self-oblivious force. The energy of self-denial must be in his being, in his heart, blood, and bones. He must go forth as a man among men, clothed in

humility, abiding in meekness, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. A servant bonds with the spirit of a king, a king in high, royal, independent bearing, and with the simplicity and sweetness of a child. The preacher must throw himself, with all the abandon of a perfect, self-emptying faith and a self-consuming zeal, into his work for the salvation of men. Hearty, heroic, compassionate, and fearless martyrs must the men be who take hold of and shape a generation for God. They cannot take hold of the church or the world for God if they are fearful timeservers or place seekers, men pleasers or men fearers, their faith is weak in God or his Word, or their denial is broken by any phase of themselves or the world.

The preacher's sharpest and strongest preaching should be to himself. His most difficult, delicate, laborious, and thorough work must be with himself. The training of the twelve was the great, difficult, and enduring work of Christ. Preachers do not make sermons; they make men and saints, and he who has made himself a man and a saint is well-trained for this business. God needs men who are great in holiness, faith, love, and fidelity, and great for God-men who are constantly preaching with holy sermons in the pulpit and by living holy lives outside of it-men who can mold a generation for God.

After this order, the early Christians were formed. They were men of solid mold, preachers after the heavenly type - heroic, stalwart, soldierly, saintly. Preaching with them required self-denial and self-crucifixion, as well as serious, laborious, martyr work. They applied themselves to it in a way that told of their generation, and they formed in its womb a generation yet unborn for God. The preaching man is to be the praying man. Prayer is the preacher's mightiest weapon. It is a powerful force in and of itself, supplying life and force to all.

The real sermon is made in the closet. The man - God's man - is made in the closet. His life and his profoundest convictions were

born in his secret communion with God. When he was alone with God, he received his spirit's burdened and tearful agony, as well as his weightiest and sweetest messages. Prayer makes the man; prayer makes the preacher; prayer makes the pastor.

`The pulpit of this day is weak in prayer. The pride of learning is opposed to the dependent humility of prayer. Prayer is with the pulpit too often only official performance for the routine of service. Prayer is no longer the powerful force it was in Paul's life or ministry. Every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry is weak as a factor in God's work and is powerless to project God's cause in this world.

Chapter 2

> *But above all, he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behavior, and the fewness and fullness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration as they sought to reach others with consolation. His prayer was the most terrifying, living reverence I'd ever felt or seen. And truly, it was a testimony. He knew and lived closer to the Lord than other men, because those who knew him best saw no reason not to approach him with reverence and fear. -William Penn of George Fox*

The sweetest graces, through a slight perversion, may bear the bitterest fruit. The sun gives life, but sunstrokes are death. Preaching is to give life; it may kill. The preacher holds the keys; he may lock as well as unlock. Preaching is God's great institution for the planting and maturing of spiritual life. When properly executed, its benefits are untold; when wrongly executed, no evil can exceed its damaging results. It is an easy matter to destroy the flock if the shepherd is unwary or the pasture is destroyed; it is easy to capture the citadel if the guards are asleep or the food and water are poisoned. Invested with such gracious prerogatives, exposed to such great evils, and involving so many grave responsibilities, it would be a parody on the shrewdness of the devil and a libel on his character and reputation if he did not bring his master influences to adulterate the preacher and the preaching. In face of all this, the exclamatory interrogatory of Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" is never out of order.

Paul says, "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit giveth life." The true ministry is God-

touched, God-enabled, and God-made. The Spirit of God is on the preacher in anointing power; the fruit of the Spirit is in his heart; the Spirit of God has vitalized the man and the word; his preaching gives life, just as the spring gives life; just as the resurrection gives life; just as the summer gives ardent life; just as the autumn gives fruitful life. The life-giving preacher is a man of God, whose heart is ever thirsty for God, whose soul is ever following hard after God, whose eye is single to God, in whom the flesh and the world have been crucified by the power of God's Spirit, and whose ministry is like the generous flood of a life-giving river.

The preaching that kills is nonspiritual preaching. The ability of preaching is not from God. Lower sources than God have given it energy and stimulants. The Spirit is not clear in the preacher or his preaching. Many kinds of forces may be projected and stimulated by preaching that kills, but they are not spiritual forces. They may resemble spiritual forces, but they are only the shadow, the counterfeit; they may seem to have life, but the life is magnetized. The letter is the preaching that kills; it may be shapely and orderly, but it is still the letter, the dry, husky letter, the empty, bald shell. The letter may contain the seed of life, but it lacks the breath of spring to evoke it; they are winter seeds, as hard as winter soil and as icy as winter air, incapable of thawing or germinating. This letter-preaching has the truth. But even divine truth has no life-giving energy alone; the Spirit must energize it, with all of God's forces at its back. Truth un-quickened by God's Spirit deadens as much as, or more than, error. It may be the truth without admixture, but without the Spirit, its shade and touch are deadly, its truth error, and its light darkness. The letter-preaching is unctionless, neither mellowed nor oiled by the Spirit. There may be tears, but tears cannot run God's machinery; tears may be nothing but summer's breath on a snow-covered iceberg, nothing but surface slush. There are feelings and earnestness, but it is the actor's emotion and the attorney's earnestness. The preacher may

feel the kindling of his own sparks and be eloquent over his own exegesis, earnest in delivering the product of his own brain; the professor may usurp the place and imitate the fire of the apostle; brains and nerves may serve the place and feign the work of God's Spirit, and by these forces, the letter may glow and sparkle like an illumined text, but the glow and sparkle will be as barren of life as the field sown with pearls. The death-dealing element is hidden behind the words, the sermon, the occasion, the manner, and the action. The great hindrance is in the preacher himself. He has not in himself the mighty life-creating forces. There may be no discount on his orthodoxy, honesty, cleanness, or earnestness, but somehow the man, the inner man, in its secret places, has never broken down and surrendered to God; his inner life is not a great highway for the transmission of God's message and God's power. Somehow, self and not God rule in the holy of holies. Somewhere, all unconscious to himself, some spiritual nonconductor has touched his inner being, and the divine current has been arrested. His inner being has never known complete spiritual bankruptcy, utter powerlessness; he has never learned to cry out with an ineffable cry of self-despair and self-helplessness until God's power and fire come in and fill, purify, and empower. Self-esteem and self-ability, in some pernicious form, have defamed and violated the temple, which should be held sacred for God. The preacher pays a high price for life-giving preaching: death to himself, crucifixion to the world, and the toil of his own soul. Only crucified preaching can bring about life. Crucified preaching can come only from a crucified man.

Chapter 3

> *When I was sick, I had to look at my life in the light of eternity more closely than I had when I was healthy. In this examination, compared to the discharge of my duties toward my fellow creatures as a man, a Christian minister, and an officer of the church, I stood approved by my own conscience, but in relation to my Redeemer and Savior, the result was different. My returns of gratitude and loving obedience bear no proportion to my obligations for redeeming, preserving, and supporting people through the vicissitudes of life from infancy to old age. The coldness of my love for Him who first loved me and has done so much for me overwhelmed and confused me, and to complete my unworthy character, I had not only neglected to improve the grace given to the extent of my duty and privilege but had also declined from first zeal and love, despite abounding in perplexing care and labor. I was confounded, humbled myself, implored mercy, and renewed my covenant to strive and devote myself unreservedly to the Lord, - Bishop McKendree.*

The preaching that kills may be and often is, orthodox-dogmatically, inviolably orthodox. We love orthodoxy. It is good. It is the best. The trophies won by truth in its conflict with an error are the levees that faith has raised against the desolating floods of honest or reckless misbelief or unbelief; but orthodoxy, clear and hard as crystal, suspicious and militant, may be but the well-shaped, well-named, and well-learned letter that kills. Nothing is so dead as a dead orthodoxy-too dead to guess, too dead to think, study, or pray.

The preaching that kills may have wisdom and an understanding of principles, be scholarly and have good taste, be able to trim the letter into its perfect pattern and illuminate it like Plato and Cicero, may study it like a lawyer studies his textbooks to write his brief or defend his case, and yet be like a frost, a killing frost. Letter preaching may be eloquent, full of poetry and rhetoric, sprinkled with prayer, spiced with sensation, and enlightened by genius, but these are just the expensive mountings, the rare and beautiful flowers that cover the corpse. The preaching that kills may be without scholarship, unmarked by any freshness of thought or feeling, clothed in tasteless generalities or vapid specialties, with a style that is irregular and slovenly, savoring neither the closet nor the study, and graced neither by thought, expression, or prayer. Under such preaching, how wide and utter the desolation! What a profound spiritual death!

This letter-preaching deals with the surface and shadow of things, not the things themselves. It does not penetrate the inner part. It has no deep insight and no strong grasp of the hidden life of God's Word. It is true on the outside, but the outside is the hull, which must be broken and penetrated for the kernel. The letter may be dressed to attract and be fashionable. Still, the attraction is not toward God or the fashion for heaven. The failure is in the preacher. God has not made him. He has never been in the hands of God like clay is in the hands of the potter. He has been busy with the sermon, its thought and finish, it's drawing, and impressive forces. Still, the deep things of God have never been sought, studied, fathomed, or experienced by him. He has never stood before "the throne high and lifted up," never heard the seraphim song, never seen the vision, never felt the rush of that awful holiness, and cried out in utter abandon and despair under the sense of weakness and guilt, and had his life renewed; his heart was touched, purged, and inflamed by the live coal from God's altar. His ministry may attract people to him, the church, the form,

and the ceremony. Still, there is no real draw to God, no sweet, holy, divine communion induced. The Church has been frescoed but not edified, pleased but not sanctified. Life is suppressed; a chill is in the summer air; the soil is baked. The city of our God becomes the city of the dead; the Church a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching have helped sin, not holiness; they have peopled hell, not heaven.

Preaching that kill is prayerless preaching. Without prayer, the preacher creates death, not life. The preacher who is feeble in prayer is feeble in life-giving forces. The preacher who has abandoned prayer as a prominent and largely dominant feature of his own character has robbed his preaching of its distinct life-giving power. There is and will be professional praying, but professional praying assists preaching in doing its lethal work. Professional praying chills and kills both preaching and praying. Much of the lax devotion and lazy, irreverent attitudes in congregational praying are attributable to professional praying in the pulpit. Long, discursive, dry, and inane are the prayers in many pulpits. Without unction or heart, they fall like a killing frost on all the graces of worship. They are death-dealing prayers. Every vestige of devotion has perished under their breath. The deadlier they are, the longer they grow. A plea for short praying, live praying, real heart praying, and Holy Spirit praying in the pulpit-direct, specific, ardent, simple, and unctuous-is in order. A school to teach preachers how to pray, as God counts praying, would be more beneficial to true piety, true worship, and true preaching than all theological schools.

Stop! Pause! Consider! Where are we? What are we doing? Preaching with the intent to kill? Praying to kill? Pray to God! the great God, the Creator of all things, and the Judge of all men! What reverence, what simplicity! what sincerity! What truth in the inner parts is required! How real we must be! How hearty! Prayer

to God is the most noble exercise, the highest effort of man, and the most genuine thing! Will we not abandon forever cursed preaching that kills and prayer that kills and do the real thing, the mightiest thing-prayerful praying, life-creating preaching-bring the mightiest force to bear on heaven and earth and draw on God's limitless and open treasure for man's need and beggary?

Chapter 4

> *before God for the "perishing" heathen. Without their salvation, nothing could make him happy. Prayer-secret, fervent, and believing prayer lies at the root of all personal godliness. A competent knowledge of the language where a missionary lives; a mild and winning temper; and a heart given up to God in closet Let us now look at Brainerd in the woods of America, pouring out his very soul religion-these are the attainments that, more than all knowledge or all other gifts, will fit us to become the instruments of God in the great work of human redemption-Carey's Brotherhood, Serampors.*

There are two extreme tendencies in the ministry. The one is to isolate itself from human interaction. The monk and the hermit were illustrations of this; they shut themselves off from men to be more with God. They failed, of course. Our relationship with God is only useful if we use it to benefit men. This age, neither with preachers nor with people, is preoccupied with God. Our desire is not in this manner. We shut ourselves to our study; we become students, bookworms, Bible worms, and sermon makers, noted for literature, thought, and sermons; but the people and God, where are they? Out of heart, out of mind Preachers who are great thinkers and students must also be great pray-ers, or they will be the greatest of backsliders, heartless professionals, rationalistic, and less than the least of preachers in God's eyes.

The other tendency is to thoroughly popularize the ministry. He is no longer God's man, but rather a man of business, a man of the people. He does not pray because his mission is to serve the people. He is satisfied if he can move people, create an interest, a sensation in favor of religion, and an interest in church work. His personal relationship with God is not a factor in his work. Prayer

has little or no place in his plans. The disaster and ruin of such a ministry cannot be computed by earthly arithmetic. What the preacher is in prayer to God for himself and his people is his true fruitfulness, his true fidelity to God and to men for time and eternity.

The preacher can't keep his spirit in harmony with the divine nature of his high calling without much prayer. It is a grave mistake to believe that the preacher can keep himself in shape and trim through duty and laborious fidelity to the work and routine of the ministry. Even sermon making, whether as an art, a task, a job, or a pastime, will engross and harden the heart and, by ignoring prayer, will alienate the heart from God. The scientist loses God in nature. The preacher may lose God in his sermon.

Prayer freshens the heart of the preacher, keeps it in tune with God and in sympathy with the people, lifts his ministry out of the chilly air of a profession, fructifies routine, and moves every wheel with the facility and power of a divine unction.

Mr. Spurgeon says, "Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer." He prays like a regular Christian; otherwise, he is a hypocrite. He prays more than average Christians, or he would be disqualified for the effort he has made. If you, as ministers, are not very prayerful, you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only you will need to be pitied but your people also, and the day will come when you shall be ashamed and confounded. All our libraries and studies pale in comparison to our closets. "Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven's gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory."

The praying that makes a prayerful ministry is not a little praying put in like flavoring to give it a pleasant smack. Still, the praying must be in the body and form the blood and bones. Prayer is no

petty duty put into a corner, no piecemeal performance made from the fragments of time snatched from business and other engagements of life. Still, it means that the best of our time, the heart of our time, and strength must be given. It does not mean the closet is absorbed in the study or swallowed up in the activities of ministerial duties; it means the closet comes first, the study and activities second, both freshened and made efficient by the closet. Prayer that impacts one's ministry must set the tone for one's life. The praying that gives color and bent to character is no pleasant, hurried pastime. It must enter as strongly into the heart and life as Christ's "strong crying and tears" did; it must draw out the soul into an agony of desire as Paul's did; it must be an inwrought fire and force like the "effective, fervent prayer" of James; it must be of that quality which, when put into the golden censer and incensed before God, works mighty spiritual throes and revolutions.

Prayer is not a little habit pinned on to us while we were tied to our mother's apron strings, nor is it a little decent quarter of a minute's grace said over an hour's dinner; it is a most serious work of our most serious years. It consumes more time and appetite than our most extended meals or lavish feasts. The prayer that underpins our preaching must be emphasized. The character of our praying will determine the nature of our preaching. Light praying results in light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick. In every ministry important for the common good, prayer has always been a serious business.

The preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer. His heart must graduate from the school of prayer. Only the heart can learn to preach in the school of prayer. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, and no gifts will make up for its lack.

Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is even greater. He will never be able to speak well and

successfully to men for God if he has not learned how to speak well to God for men. More than this, prayerless words in the pulpit and out of it are deadening words.

Chapter 5

> *You know the value of prayer; it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it. -Sir Thomas Buxton.*
>
> *Prayer is the first, second, and third thing that a minister needs to do. Pray, then, my dear brother; pray, pray, pray. - Edward Payson*

In the preacher's life, in the preacher's study, and in the preacher's pulpit, prayer must be a conspicuous, all-impregnating force and an all-coloring ingredient. It must play no secondary role; it cannot be a mere coating. To him it is given to be with his Lord "all night in prayer." To train himself in self-denying prayer, the preacher is charged to look to his Master, who, "rising up a great while before day, went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." The preacher's study ought to be a closet, a Bethel, an altar, a vision, and a ladder, so that every thought might ascend heavenward before it went manward and that every part of the sermon might be scented by the air of heaven and made serious because God was in the study.

As the engine never moves until the fire is kindled, so preaching, with all its machinery, perfection, and polish, is at a dead standstill as far as spiritual results are concerned until prayer has kindled and created the steam. The texture, fineness, and strength of the sermon are as much rubbish unless the mighty impulse of prayer is in it, through it, and behind it. The preacher must, through prayer, put God in the sermon. The preacher must, through prayer, move God toward the people before he can move them to God with his words. The preacher must have an audience and ready access to God before he can have access to the people. An open way to God for the preacher is the surest pledge of an open way to the people.

It is important to say again and again that prayer that is just a habit, a performance, or something done as a job is a dead and rotten thing. Such praying has no connection with the praying for which we plead. We are stressing true praying, which engages and sets on fire every high element of the preacher's being-prayer that is born of vital oneness with Christ and the fullness of the Holy Ghost, which springs from the deep, overflowing fountains of tender compassion and deathless solicitude for man's eternal good; a consuming zeal for the glory of God; a thorough conviction of the preacher's difficult and delicate work and of the imperative need of God's mightiest help. The only true prayer is based on these solemn and profound convictions. Preaching backed by such prayer is the only preaching that sows the seeds of eternal life in human hearts and builds men up for heaven.

It is true that there may be popular preaching, pleasant preaching, taking preaching, preaching of much intellectual, literary, and brainy force, with its measure and form of good, with little or no praying; but the preaching that secures God's end in preaching must be born of prayer from text to exordium, delivered with the energy and spirit of prayer, followed and made to germinate, and kept in vital force in the hearts of the hearers by the preacher's prayers, long after the occasion has passed.

We may excuse the spiritual poverty of our preaching in many ways, but the true secret will be found in the lack of urgent prayer for God's presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are preachers innumerable who can deliver masterful sermons after their order, but the effects are short-lived and do not enter as a factor at all into the regions of the spirit where the fearful war between God and Satan, heaven and hell, is being waged because they are not made powerfully militant and spiritually victorious by prayer.

The preachers who gain mighty results for God are the men who have prevailed in their pleadings with God before venturing to plead with men. The preachers who are the mightiest in their closets with God are the mightiest in their pulpits with men.

Preachers are human beings who are exposed to, and often caught by, strong human currents. Praying is spiritual work, and human nature does not like taxing spiritual work. Human nature wants to sail to heaven under a favoring breeze on a full, smooth sea. Prayer is humbling work. It abases intellect and pride, crucifies vainglory, and signs our spiritual bankruptcy, and all these are hard for flesh and blood to bear. It is easier not to pray than to bear them. So, we come to one of the crying evils of these times, maybe of all times: little or no praying. Of these two evils, little praying is worse than no praying. Little prayer is a kind of make-believe, a salvo for the conscience, a farce, and a delusion.

The little value we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it. The time given to prayer by the average preacher scarcely counts in the daily aggregate. Not infrequently, the preacher's only time for praying is by his bedside in his nightdress, ready for bed and soon in it, with, perchance, the addition of a few hasty snatches of prayer before he is dressed in the morning. How feeble, vain, and insignificant is such prayer in comparison to the time and energy devoted to prayer by holy men both in and out of the Bible? How poor and mean our petty, childish praying is beside the habits of the true men of God in all ages! To men who think praying their main business and devote time to it according to this high estimate of its importance, God commits the keys of his kingdom, and by them he works his spiritual wonders in this world. Great prayer is the sign and seal of God's great leaders and the earnest of the conquering forces with which God will crown their labors.

The preacher is commissioned to pray as well as to preach. His mission is incomplete if he does not do both well. The preacher may speak with all the eloquence of men and of angels, but unless he can pray with a faith that draws all of heaven to his aid, his preaching will be "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" for permanent God-honoring and soul-saving.

Chapter 6

> *The primary cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is due to an unaccountable backwardness to fray. With a ready heart, I can write, read, converse, or listen, but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is, the more likely my earned heart is to begin with it. Prayer, patience, and faith are never disappointing. I have long since learned that if ever I were to be a minister, faith and prayer would make me one. Everything else is relatively easy when I can find my heart in a frame and have liberty for prayer. - Richard Newton*

It may be put down as a spiritual axiom that in every truly successful ministry, prayer is an evident and controlling force-evident and controlling in the life of the preacher and evident and controlling in the deep spirituality of his work. A ministry can be very thoughtful without prayer. The preacher can gain fame and popularity without prayer. The preacher's whole life and work can run without prayer or with barely enough to grease one cog. But a ministry can't be spiritual and make the preacher and his people holy without prayer being a clear and controlling force.

The preacher who prays actually brings God into the work. God does not come into the preacher's work as a matter of course or on general principles, but he comes by prayer and with a special urgency. God will be found by us on the day we seek him with all our hearts, and this is true for both the preacher and the penitent. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry that brings the preacher into sympathy with the people. Prayer fundamentally unites the human and the divine. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry qualified for the high offices and responsibilities of the preacher. Colleges, learning, books, theology, and preaching cannot make a preacher,

but praying does. The apostles' commission to preach was a blank until filled up by the Pentecost that praying brought. A prayerful minister has passed beyond the regions of the popular, beyond the man of mere affairs, of secularities, of pulpit attractiveness; he has passed beyond the ecclesiastical organizer or general into a sublime and mightier region, the region of the spiritual. Holiness is the product of his work; transfigured hearts and lives emblazon the reality of his work, its trueness, and its substantial nature. God is with him. His ministry is not based on worldly or surface principles. He is deeply invested in and educated in God's things. His long, deep communing with God about his people and the agony of his wrestling spirit have crowned him as a prince in the things of God. The iciness of the mere professional has long since melted under the intensity of his prayer.

The superficial results of many ministries, the death of others, can be found in a lack of prayer. No ministry can succeed without much prayer, and this prayer must be fundamental, ever-abiding, and ever-increasing. The text of the sermon should be the result of prayer. The study should be bathed in prayer; all its duties should be impregnated with prayer; its whole spirit should be that of prayer. "I am sorry that I have prayed so little" was the deathbed regret of one of God's chosen ones-a sad and remorseful regret for a preacher. "I want a life of greater, deeper, and truer prayer," said the late Archbishop Tait. So may we all say, and so may we all be secure. God's true preachers have been distinguished by one great feature: they were men of prayer. Despite often differing in many things, they have always had a common center. They may have started from different points and traveled different roads, but they converged on one point: they were one in prayer. God was the center of their attraction, and prayer was the path that led to God. These men prayed so much that their prayers entered and shaped their characters; they prayed so much that their prayers affected their own lives and the lives of others; they prayed so much that

their prayers made church history and influenced the current of the times. They spent a lot of time praying, not because they were counting the shadows on the dial or the hands on the clock, but because it was such an important and engaging business to them that they couldn't bear giving it up.

Prayer was to them what it was to Paul: a striving with earnest effort of the soul; what it was to Jacob: a wrestling and prevailing; what it was to Christ: "strong crying and tears." They "prayed always in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." "Effectual, fervent prayer" has been the mightiest weapon of God's mightiest soldiers. The statement in regard to Elijah is that he "was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. This verse comprehends all prophets and preachers who have moved their generation for God and shows the instrument by which they worked their wonders.

Chapter 7

> *The great masters and teachers in Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. To stay within the bounds of the English Church, Bishop Andrewes is said to have spent five hours per day on his knees. The greatest practices that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at through prayer, says Canon Liddon.*

While many private prayers, by their nature, must be short; while public prayers, as a rule, ought to be short and condensed; while there is ample room for and value put on ejaculatory prayer; yet in our private communions with God, time is a feature essential to its value. Much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer, which is felt as a mighty force, is the mediate or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the long ones that have preceded them.

The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by someone who has not prevailed with God in a much larger struggle that has lasted a long time. Jacob's victory of faith could not have been gained without that all-night wrestling. Pop calls do not introduce you to God. God does not bestow his gifts on the haphazard or hurried. The secret to knowing and influencing God is to spend a lot of time with him. He yields to the persistency of a faith that knows him. He bestows his richest gifts upon those who declare their desire for and appreciation of those gifts with the constancy and earnestness of their importunity. Christ, who in this as well as other things is our example, spent many whole nights in prayer. His custom was to pray often. He had his habitual place to pray. Many long seasons of praying make up his history and character. Paul prayed day and night. It took time away from very important

interests for Daniel to pray three times a day. David's morning, noon, and night prayers were doubtless on many occasions very protracted. While we have no specific account of the time these Bible saints spent in prayer, the indications are that they consumed much time in prayer, and on some occasions, long seasons of praying were their custom.

We do not want anyone to believe that the value of their prayers can be measured by the clock, but our goal is to impress on our minds the importance of spending time alone with God, and if this feature is not produced by our faith, then our faith is feeble and superficial.

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character and have most powerfully affected the world for him have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four until eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else," a close friend wrote of him, "and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serene face next to his shining eyes." John Fletcher stained the walls of his room with the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night-always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat," he said, "without lifting my heart to God." His greeting to a friend was always, "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said, "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer every morning, the devil gets the victory through the day." "I have so much business I cannot get by without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

Archbishop Leighton was so alone with God that he seemed to be in perpetual meditation. "Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure," says his biographer. Bishop Ken was so in love with

God that his soul was described as "God-enamored." He was with God before the clock struck three every morning. Bishop Asbury said, "I propose to rise at four o'clock as often as I can and spend two hours in prayer and meditation." Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o'clock for his business of praying until eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim, "O how this shames me!" "Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?" He who has learned this trade well draws at will, on sight, and with acceptance of heaven's unfailing bank.

One of the holiest and most gifted of Scottish preachers says: "I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God." It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and it is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of praying before going to bed, but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession. This was Robert McCheyne's prayer plan. "The memorable Methodist band's prayer shames us." "From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer."

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher, thought the day would be wasted if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid in which he might wrap himself when he rose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground, weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!"

Chapter 8

> *The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable; praying requires the total concentration of the faculties. "The great majority of worldly and learned men are absolutely incapable of prayer," - Coleridge.*

Bishop Wilson says, "In H. Martyn's journal, the spirit of prayer, the time he devoted to the duty, and his fervor in it are the first things that strike me."

Payson wore the hard-wood boards into grooves where his knees pressed so often and for so long. His biographer says: "His continuing instant in prayer, be his circumstances what they might, is the most noticeable fact in his history and points out the duty of all who would rival his eminence." "His distinguished and almost uninterrupted success must undoubtedly be attributed in large part to his ardent and persevering prayers."

The Marquis DeRenty, to whom Christ was most precious, ordered his servant to call him from his devotions at the end of half an hour. The servant at the time saw his face through an aperture. It was marked with such holiness that he hated to arouse him. His lips were moving, but he was perfectly silent. He waited until three and a half hours had passed; then he called to him when he arose from his knees, saying that the half hour was so short when he was communing with Christ.

Brainerd said, "I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer."

William Bramwell is famous in Methodist annals for personal holiness, his wonderful success in preaching, and the marvelous answers to his prayers. For hours at a time, he would pray. He almost lived on his knees. He went over his circuits like a flame of

fire. The fire was kindled by the time he spent in prayer. In retirement, he would frequently devote up to four hours to prayer.

Bishop Andrewes spent the greater part of five hours every day in prayer and devotion.

Sir Henry Havelock always spent the first two hours of each day at 4 a.m. alone with God. If the encampment were struck at 6 a.m., he would rise at 4 a.m.

Earl Cairns rose daily at six o'clock to secure an hour and a half for the study of the Bible and for prayer before conducting family worship at a quarter to eight.

Dr. Judson's success in prayer is attributable to the fact that he gave much time to prayer. "Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two or three hours every day, not merely to devotional exercises, but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God," he says on this point. Endeavor seven times a day to withdraw from business and company and lift up your soul to God in private retirement. Begin the day by rising after midnight and devoting some time amid the silence and darkness of the night to this sacred work. Let the hour of first light find thee at the same work. Let the hours of nine, twelve, three, six, and nine at night witness the same. Be resolute in his cause. Make all practical sacrifices to maintain it. "Consider that your time is short, and that business and company must not be allowed to rob you of your God." "Fanatical directions!" we exclaim. Dr. Judson impressed an empire for Christ and laid the foundations of God's kingdom with imperishable granite in the heart of Burma. He was successful-one of the few men who mightily impressed the world for Christ. Many men of greater gifts, genius, and learning than he have made no such impression; their religious work is like footsteps in the sand, but he has engraved his work on adamant. The secret of its profundity and endurance is found in the fact that he gave time to prayer. He kept the iron red-hot with prayer, and

God's skill fashioned it with enduring power. No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer, and no man can be a man of prayer who does not devote much time to praying.

Is it true that prayer is simply the compliance of a dull and mechanical habit? "A petty performance into which we are trained until tameness, shortness, and superficiality are its chief elements?" Is it true that prayer is, as is assumed, little more than the half-passive play of sentiment, which flows languidly on through the minutes or hours of easy reverie? Canon Liddon continues: "Let those who have really prayed give the answer." They sometimes describe prayer with the patriarch Jacob as a wrestling match with an unseen power that can last late into the night hours or even until the break of day. Sometimes they refer to common intercession with St. Paul as a concerted struggle. When praying, they have their eyes fixed on the Great Intercessor in Gethsemane and the drops of blood that fall to the ground in that agony of resignation and sacrifice. Persistence is the essence of successful prayer.

Persistence means not dreaminess but sustained work. It is through prayer, especially, that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. It was a saying of the late Bishop Hamilton that "No man is likely to do much good in prayer who does not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work to be prepared for and persevere in with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which, in our opinion, are at once most interesting and most necessary."

Chapter 9

> *I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often, when I sleep long or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ rose early and went into seclusion, as David says, "Early will I seek thee; thou shalt hear my voiced. "Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul is unfed, and the lamp is not trimmed. Then, when in secret prayer, the soul is often out of tune. I believe it is far better to start with God-to see his face first and get my soul close to him before moving on-Robert Murray McCheyne*

The men who have done the most for God in this world have been on their knees from the beginning. He who wastes the early morning's opportunity and freshness on things other than seeking God will make little progress the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be last for the remainder of the day.

Behind this early rising and early praying is the ardent desire that presses us into this pursuit after God. Morning listlessness is the index to a listless heart. The heart, which is behindhand in seeking God in the morning, has lost its relish for God. David's heart was ardent toward God. He hungered and thirsted after God, and so he sought him early, before daylight. The bed and sleep could not chain his soul in its eagerness for God. Christ desired communion with God, so he would rise early in the morning and go out into the mountain to pray. The disciples, when fully awake and ashamed of their indulgence, would know where to find him. We might go

through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.

A desire for God that cannot break the chains of sleep is a weak thing and will do little good for God after it has indulged itself fully. The desire for God that keeps so far behind the devil and the world at the beginning of the day will never catch up.

It is not simply getting up that puts men in the front and makes them captain generals in God's hosts, but it is the ardent desire that stirs and breaks all self-indulgent chains. However, getting up allows the desire to be expressed, increased, and strengthened. If they had lain in bed and indulged themselves, the desire would have been quenched. The desire aroused them and put them on the stretch for God, and this heeding and acting on the call gave their faith its grasp on God and gave to their hearts the sweetest and fullest revelation of God, and this strength of faith and fullness of revelation made them saints by eminence, and the halo of their sainthood has come down to us, and we have entered on the enjoyment of their conquests. But we get our fill of entertainment, not productions. We build their tombs and write their epitaphs, but we are careful not to follow their examples.

We need a generation of preachers who seek God and seek him early, who give the freshness and dew of effort to God and secure the freshness and fullness of his power in return, so that he can be as the dew to them, full of gladness and strength, despite the heat and labor of the day. Our apathy toward God is our crying sin. The children of this world are far wiser than we are. They are at it early and late. We do not seek God with ardor and diligence. No man gets God unless he pursues him hard, and no soul pursues God unless he pursues him early in life.

Chapter 10

> *There is a manifest want of spiritual influence in the ministry of the present day. It's something I feel and see in others. I am afraid there is too much of a managing, contriving, and maneuvering temper of mind among us. We are laying ourselves out more than is expedient to meet one man's taste and another man's prejudices. The ministry is a grand and holy undertaking that necessitates a simple habit of spirit and a holy but humble apathy toward all consequences. The leading defect in Christian ministers is a lack of a sacred habit, - Richard Cecil.*

Never was there a greater need for saintly men and women; more imperative still is the call for saintly, God-devoted preachers. The world moves with gigantic strides. Satan rules the world and works hard to make all its movements serve his purposes. Religion must do its best work and present its most attractive and perfect models. By every means, modern sainthood must be inspired by the loftiest ideals and the largest possibilities through the Spirit. Paul lived on his knees, praying that the Ephesian Church might measure the heights, breadths, and depths of an unmeasurable saintliness and "be filled with all the fullness of God." Epaphras laid himself out with the exhaustive toil and strenuous conflict of fervent prayer, that the Colossian Church might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Everything was stretched in apostolic times so that the people of God could "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Dwarfs were not rewarded, and an old baby was not encouraged. The babies were to grow; the old, instead of feebleness and infirmities, were to bear

fruit in old age and be fat and flourishing. The divinest thing in religion is holy men and holy women.

No amount of money, genius, or culture can move things for God. The secret of power is holiness energizing the soul, setting the whole man aflame with love and with a desire for more faith, more prayer, more zeal, and more consecration. These we need and must have, and men must be the incarnation of this God-inflamed devotedness. God's advance has been stayed, his cause crippled, and his name dishonored for their lack. Genius (though the loftiest and most gifted), education (though the most learned and refined), position, dignity, place, honored names, and high ecclesiastics cannot move this chariot of our God. It is a fiery one, and fiery forces only can move it. Milton's genius fails. The imperial strength of a Leo fails. Brainerd's spirit can move it. Brainerd's spirit was on fire for God and for souls. Nothing earthly, worldly, or selfish came in to lessen in the least the intensity of this all-impelling and all-consuming force and flame.

Prayer is the creator as well as the channel of devotion. The spirit of devotion is the spirit of prayer. Prayer and devotion are united as the soul and body are united and as life and the heart are united. There is no real prayer without devotion, and no devotion without prayer. The preacher must be surrendered to God in the holiest devotion. He is not a professional man, and his ministry is not a profession; it is a divine institution, a divine devotion. He is devoted to God. His aim, aspirations, and ambitions are for God and to God, and to such ends, prayer is as essential as food is to life.

The preacher, above everything else, must be devoted to God. The preacher's relationships with God are the insignia and credentials of his ministry. These must be clear, conclusive, and unmistakable. No common, surface type of piety must be his. If he does not excel in grace, he does not excel at all. He does not preach if his life,

character, and conduct do not preach. If his piety is light, his preaching may be as soft and sweet as music and as gifted as Apollo, yet its weight will be a feather's weight, visionary, and fleeting as the morning cloud or the early dew. Devotion to God- there is no substitute for this in the preacher's character and conduct. Devotion to a church, ideas, an organization, or orthodoxy are all paltry, deceptive, and vain when they serve as the source of inspiration, the animus of a call. God must be the mainspring of the preacher's effort, the fountain and crown of all his toil. The name and honor of Jesus Christ, as well as the advancement of his cause, must be everything. The preacher must have no inspiration but the name of Jesus Christ; no ambition but to have him glorified; no toil but for him. Then prayer will be a source of his illuminations, the means of perpetual advance, and the gauge of his success. The preacher's constant goal, his only ambition, is to have God with him.

Never did the cause of God need more perfect illustrations of the possibilities of prayer than in this age. No age or person will be examples of gospel power unless they are in deep and earnest prayer. A prayerless age will have scant models of divine power. Prayerless hearts will never rise to these Alpine heights. The age may be better than the past, but there is an infinite distance between the betterment of an age by the force of an advancing civilization and its betterment by the increase of holiness and Christlikeness by the energy of prayer. The Jews were much better off when Christ came than in the ages before. It was the golden age of their Pharisaic religion. Their golden religious age crucified Christ. Never more praying, never less praying; never more sacrifices, never less sacrifice; never less idolatry, never more idolatry; never more temple worship, never less God worship; never more lip service, never less heart service (God worshiped by lips whose hearts and hands crucified God's Son!); never more of churchgoers, never less of saints.

Saints are created through the power of prayer. Holy characters are formed by the power of real prayer. The more true saints there are, the more people pray; the more people pray, the more there are true saints.

Chapter 11

> *I urge upon you a growing communion with Christ. There are curtains to be drawn aside in Christ that we have never seen before and new folds of love in him. I doubt I'll ever get to the end of that love; there are so many pies in it. Therefore, dig deep, sweat, labor, take pains for him, and set aside as much time in the day for him as possible. He will be won in work, - RUTHERFORD.*

God has now and has had many of these devoted, prayerful preachers-men whose lives prayer has been a mighty, controlling, conspicuous force. The world has felt their power; God has felt and honored their power; God's cause has been moved mightily and swiftly by their prayers; and holiness has shone out in their characters with a divine effulgence.

God found one of the men he was looking for in David Brainerd, whose work and name have gone into history. He was no ordinary man, but was capable of shining in any company, the peer of the wise and gifted ones, eminently suited to fill the most attractive pulpits and to labor among the most refined and most cultured, who were so anxious to secure him for their pastor. President Edwards bears testimony that he was "a young man of distinguished talents, who had extraordinary knowledge of men and things, had rare conversational powers, excelled in his knowledge of theology, and was truly, for one so young, an extraordinary divine, and especially in all matters relating to experimental religion." I never knew his equal, both in terms of his age and his standing for clear and accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion. His manner in prayer was almost inimitable, such as I have very rarely known. "His learning was very considerable, and he had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit."

No sublime story has been recorded in earthly annals than that of David Brainerd; no miracle attests to the truth of Christianity with a diviner's force better than the life and work of such a man. Alone in the savage wilds of America, struggling day and night with a mortal disease, unschooled in the care of souls, having access to the Indians for a large portion of time only through the bungling medium of a pagan interpreter, with the Word of God in his heart and in his hand, his soul fired with the divine flame, and a place and time to pour out his soul to God in prayer, he fully established the worship of God and secured all its gracious results. The Indians went from being ignorant and low-class heathens to being pure, devout, and smart Christians. All bad habits were fixed, and the external duties of Christianity were accepted and done right away. Family prayer was started and followed religiously, and the internal virtues of religion became sweeter and stronger. The solution to these results is found in David Brainerd himself, not in the conditions or accidents, but in the man himself. He was God's man, for God first and last and all the time. God could flow unhindered through him. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straightened by the conditions of his heart; the entire channel was broadened and cleaned out for God's fullest and most powerful passage, so that God with all his mighty forces could descend on the hopeless, savage wilderness and transform it into his blooming and fruitful garden; for nothing is too difficult for God to do if he can find the right kind of man to do it with.

Brainerd lived a life of holiness and prayer. His diary is full and monotonous with the record of his seasons of fasting, meditation, and retirement. The time he spent in private prayer amounted to many hours per day. "When I return home," he said, "and give myself to meditation, prayer, and fasting, my soul longs for mortification, self-denial, humility, and divorcement from all things of the world." "I have nothing to do," he said, "with earth, but only to labor in it honestly for God." "I don't want to live a

single minute for anything the earth can provide." "Feeling somewhat of the sweetness of communion with God and the constraining force of his love, and how admirably it captivates the soul and makes all the desires and affections center in God, I set aside this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work that I have in view of preaching the gospel, and that the Lord would return to me and show me the light of his countenance," he prayed after this high order. I had little life and power in the forenoon. Near the middle of the afternoon, God enabled me to wrestle ardently in intercession for my absent friends, but just at night, the Lord visited me marvelously in prayer. I think my soul was never in such agony before. I felt no restraint, for the treasures of divine grace were opened to me. I wrestled for absent friends, for the gathering of souls, for multitudes of poor souls, and for many that I thought were the children of God, personally, in many distant places. I was in agony from sunup for half an hour until near dark, and I was drenched in sweat all over, but it seemed like I had done nothing. You shed blood for poor souls, my dear Savior! I longed for more compassion toward them. "I felt still in a sweet frame, under a sense of divine love and grace, and went to bed in such a frame, with my heart set on God." It was prayer that gave his life and ministry their marvelous power.

Men of mighty prayer are men of spiritual strength. Prayers never die. Brainerd's whole life was a life of prayer. He prayed both during the day and at night. Before preaching and after preaching, he prayed. Riding through the interminable solitudes of the forests, he prayed. On his bed of straw, he prayed. Retiring to the dense and lonely forests, he prayed. Hour by hour, day after day, early in the morning and late at night, he was praying and fasting, pouring out his soul, interceding, and communing with God. He was mightily with God in prayer, and God was mightily with him; and by it, he, being dead, still speaks and works, and he will speak and

work until the end comes, and he will be with the first among the glorious ones of that glorious day.

Jonathan Edwards says of him, "His life shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry." He sought it as a soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle or as a man runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love for Christ and souls, how did he labor? Always fervently. Not only in word and doctrine, in public and in private, but also in day and night prayers, secret wrestling with God, and laboring in birth with unutterable groans and agonies, until Christ was formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent. "Like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day."

Chapter 12

> *"For nothing reaches the heart except what comes from the heart, and nothing pierces the conscience except what comes from a living conscience." - William Penn*
>
> *In the morning, I was more engaged in preparing my head than my heart. This has been my frequent error, and I have always felt the evil of it, especially in prayer. Reform it, then, O Lord! "Enlarge my heart, and I shall preach," - Robert Murray McCheyne.*

A sermon with more head than heart will not have the same impact on the listeners, - Richard Cecil.

Prayer, with its manifold and many-sided forces, helps the mouth utter the truth in its fullness and freedom. The preacher is to be prayed for; the preacher is made by prayer. The preacher's mouth is to be prayed for; his mouth is to be opened and filled by prayer. A holy mouth is formed through much praying; a brave mouth is formed through much praying. The Church and the world, God and heaven, owe much to Paul's mouth, and Paul's mouth owed its power to prayer.

How manifold, illimitable, valuable, and helpful prayer is to the preacher in so many ways, at so many points, in every way! One significant advantage is that it benefits his heart.

Praying makes the preacher a heart preacher. Prayer puts the preacher's heart into the preacher's sermon; prayer puts the preacher's sermon into the preacher's heart.

The preacher is created by the heart. Men with great hearts are great preachers. Men with bad hearts may do a measure of good, but this is rare. The hireling and the stranger may help the sheep at

some points, but it is the good shepherd with the good shepherd's heart who will bless the sheep and answer the full measure of the shepherd's place.

We have emphasized sermon preparation to the point that we have lost sight of the important thing to prepare-the heart. A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. "A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon."

Volumes have been written laying down the mechanics and taste of sermon-making, until we have become possessed with the idea that this scaffolding is the building. The young preacher has been taught to lay out all his strength on the form, taste, and beauty of his sermon as a mechanical and intellectual product. We have thereby cultivated a vicious taste among the people and raised the clamor for talent instead of grace, eloquence instead of piety, rhetoric instead of revelation, and reputation and brilliancy instead of holiness. We have lost the true concept of preaching, preaching power, a strong conviction for sin, a rich experience and elevated Christian character, and the authority over consciences and lives that comes with genuine preaching.

It would not do to say that preachers study too much. Some of them do not study at all; others do not study enough. Numbers do not study in the proper way to demonstrate that they are God-approved workers. But our great lack is not in head culture but in heart culture; not lack of knowledge but lack of holiness is our sad and telling defect-not that we know too much but that we do not meditate on God and his word and watch and fast and pray enough. The heart is the great hindrance to our preaching. Words pregnant with divine truth encounter nonconductors in our hearts, and when they are arrested, they fall shorn and powerless. Can ambition, which lusts after praise and place, preach the gospel of Him who made himself of no reputation and took on himself the form of a servant? Can the proud, the vain, and the egotistical preach the

gospel of him who was meek and lowly? Can a bad-tempered, passionate, selfish, hard, worldly man preach the system of long-suffering, self-denial, and tenderness, which requires separation from enmity and crucifixion, to the world? Can the hired official, who is heartless and perfunctory, preach the gospel that demands the shepherd give his life for the sheep? Can a covetous man preach the gospel until he has gleaned his heart and can say, in the spirit of Christ and Paul, in the words of Wesley, "I count it dung and dross; I trample it under my feet; I (yet not I, but the grace of God in me) esteem it just as the mire of the streets, I desire it not, I seek it not?" God's revelation does not need the light of human genius, the polish and strength of human culture, the brilliancy of human thought, or the force of human brains to adorn or enforce it, but it does demand the simplicity, the docility, the humility, and the faith of a child's heart.

It was this surrender and subordination of intellect and genius to the divine and spiritual forces that made Paul peerless among the apostles. It was this that gave Wesley his power and radiated the fruits of his labors throughout human history. This gave Loyola the strength to arrest the retreating forces of Catholicism.

Our great need is heart preparation. Luther held it as an axiom: "He who has prayed well has studied well." We do not say that men should not think and use their intellects, but he who cultivates his heart the most will use his intellect the best. We do not say that preachers should not be students, but we do say that their great study should be the Bible, and he who studies the Bible best has kept his heart with diligence. We do not say that the preacher should not know men, but he will be the greater adept in human nature who has fathomed the depths and intricacies of his own heart. We do say that while the channel of preaching is the mind, its fountain is the heart; you may broaden and deepen the channel, but if you do not look well to the purity and depth of the fountain, you will have a dry or polluted channel. We do say that almost any

man of common intelligence has sense enough to preach the gospel, but very few have grace enough to do so. We do say that he who has struggled with and conquered his own heart, who has taught it humility, faith, love, truth, mercy, sympathy, and courage, and who can pour the rich treasures of the heart thus trained on the consciences of his hearers through a manly intellect, all surcharged with the power of the gospel, will be the truest and most successful preacher in the esteem of his Lord.

Chapter 13

> *Study not to become a great preacher. Jericho's are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply to Jesus for "preaching" food, and "what is wanted will be given," and "what is given will be blessed," whether it be a barley grain or a baked loaf, a crust, or a crumb. Depending on where your heart is, your mouth will be a flowing stream or a sealed fountain. Avoid all controversy in your preaching, whether orally or in writing; preach nothing down but the devil and nothing but Jesus Christ,-Berridge.*

The heart is the savior of the world. Heads do not save. Genius, brains, brilliancy, strength, and natural gifts do not save. The gospel flows through hearts. All the mightiest forces are heart forces. All the sweetest and loveliest graces are heart graces. Great hearts make great characters; great hearts make divine characters. God is love. Nothing is greater than love, and nothing is greater than God. Hearts make heaven; heaven is love. There is nothing higher or sweeter than heaven. It is the heart, not the head, which makes God's great preachers. The heart counts much in religion. The heart must speak from the pulpit. The heart must hear in the pew. In fact, we serve God with our hearts. Head homage does not pass current in heaven.

We believe that one of the most serious and popular errors of the modern pulpit is the tendency to put more thought than prayer, more head than heart, into its sermons. Big hearts make big preachers; good hearts make good preachers. A theological school to enlarge and "cultivate the heart" is the golden desideratum of the gospel. The pastor binds his people to him and rules them with his heart. They may admire his gifts, be proud of his ability, and be moved by his sermons for the time being, but his heart is the

source of his power. His scepter is love. The throne of his power is his heart.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Martyrs are never made from heads. It is the heart that surrenders life to love and fidelity. It takes great courage to be a faithful pastor, but the heart alone can supply this courage. Gifts and genius may be brave, but they are the gifts and genius of the heart and not the head.

It is easier to fill the head than it is to prepare the heart. It is easier to make a brain sermon than a heart sermon. It was the heart that drew the Son of God from heaven. It is the heart that will draw men to heaven. Men of heart are what the world needs to sympathize with its woe, to kiss away its sorrows, to compassionately bear its misery, and to alleviate its pain. Christ was the preeminent messenger of sorrows because he was the preeminent man of heart.

"Give me thy heart," God asks of men. "Give me thy heart," says man to man.

A professional ministry is a heartless ministry. When salary plays a great part in the ministry, the heart plays a little part. We may make preaching our business without putting our hearts into it. He who puts himself first in his preaching puts the heart last. He who does not study with his heart will never reap a harvest for God. The closet is the heart's study. We will learn more about how to preach and what to preach there than we can in our libraries. "Jesus wept" is the shortest and biggest verse in the Bible. It is he who goes forth weeping (not preaching great sermons), bearing precious seed, who shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Praying gives sense, brings wisdom, and broadens and strengthens the mind. The closet is a perfect schoolteacher and schoolhouse for the preacher. Thought is not only brightened and clarified in

prayer, but thought is born in prayer. We can learn more in an hour of prayer, indeed, than from many hours of study. Books are in the closet that can be found and read nowhere else. Revelations happen in the closet that don't happen anywhere else.

Chapter 14

> *One bright blessing private prayer brings to the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something-unction from the Holy One. If the anointing that we bear does not come from the Lord of hosts, we are deceivers, since only through prayer can we obtain it. Let us continue our instant, constant, and fervent supplication. Let your fleece lie on the thrashing floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven. -Spurgeon*

Alexander Knox, a Christian philosopher of the days of Wesley, not an adherent but a strong personal friend of Wesley and with much spiritual sympathy for the Wesleyan movement, writes: "It is strange and lamentable, but I verily believe the fact to be that except among Methodists and Methodistical clergymen, there is not much interesting preaching in England. The clergy in general have completely lost the art. There is, I believe, in the great laws of the moral world a kind of secret understanding, like the affinities in chemistry, between rightly promulgated religious truth and the deepest feelings of the human mind. Where one is duly exhibited, the other will respond. Did not our hearts burn within us? But this devout feeling is indispensable to the speaker. Now, based on my own observations, I must state that this unction is far more likely to be found in a Methodist church than in a parish church in England. This, and this alone, seems to be what fills the Methodist houses and thins the churches. I am, I believe, no enthusiast; I am a most sincere and cordial churchman, a humble disciple of the Hale and Boyle, Burnet, and Leighton schools. Now, I must state that when I was in this country two years ago, I did not hear a single preacher who taught me in the manner of my own great masters, but only those who are referred to as Methodist. And I now despair of getting an atom of heart instruction from any other quarter. The

Methodist preachers (however, I may not always approve of all their expressions) most assuredly diffuse this true and undefiled religion. I felt real pleasure last Sunday. I can bear witness that the preacher did at once speak the words of truth and sobriety. There was no eloquence-the honest man never dreamed of such a thing. Still, there was far better: a cordial communication of vitalized truth. I say vitalized because it was impossible not to feel he lived for himself based on what he said to others.

This unction is the art of preaching. The preacher who never had this unction never had the art of preaching. The preacher who has lost this unction has lost the art of preaching. Whatever other arts he may have and retain-the art of sermon-making, the art of eloquence, the art of great, clear thinking, the art of pleasing an audience - he has lost the divine art of preaching. This unction makes God's truth powerful and interesting; it draws and attracts, edifies, convicts, and saves.

This unction vitalizes God's revealed truth, making it living and life-giving. Even God's truth spoken without this unction is light, dead, and deadening. Though abounding in truth, weighty with thought, sparkling with rhetoric, pointed by logic, and powerful by earnestness, without this divine unction it issues in death and not in life. Mr. Spurgeon says, "I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by preaching with unction." Yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence. Samaria, in famine, typifies a world without it. Jerusalem, with her feast of fat things full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Everyone knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it by itself? Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing. We know, but we cannot tell others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish to counterfeit it. Unction is a thing that you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless. Yet it

is, in and of itself, priceless and beyond measure necessary if you want to edify believers and bring sinners to Christ.

Chapter 15

> *I speak for all of eternity. Above all things, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear, and your heart is full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. Remember that God, and not man, must have the glory. How much would be done in response to God's children's prayers if the veil of the world's machinery were lifted? -Robert Murray McCheyne*

Unction is that indefinable, indescribable something which an old, renowned Scotch preacher describes thusly: "There is sometimes something in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression and cannot be described as to what it is or from whence it comes, but with a sweet violence it pierces into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord." "If there be any way to obtain such a thing, it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker."

We call it unction. It is this unction which makes the word of God "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This unction gives the preacher's words such point, sharpness, and power and creates such friction and stir in many a dead congregation. The letter's strictness revealed the same truths: they were as smooth as human oil could make them, but there was no sign of life, no pulse throb; everything was as peaceful and dead as the grave. In the meantime, the same preacher receives a baptism of this unction; the divine inspiration is on him; the letter of the Word has been embellished and fired by this mysterious power, and the throbbing of life begin-life that receives or life that

resists. The unction is all-encompassing, convicting the conscience and breaking the heart.

This divine unction is the feature that separates and distinguishes true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting the truth, and it creates a wide spiritual chasm between the preacher who has it and the one who does not. It backs up and impregnates the revealed truth with all the energy of God. "Unction" is simply God speaking through his own words and through his own preacher. It is all potential and personal to the preacher by mighty and great prayerfulness and continuous prayerfulness; it inspires and clarifies his intellect, gives insight and grasp, and projects power; it gives the preacher heart power, which is greater than head power; and tenderness, purity, and force flow from the heart by it. Enlargement, freedom, fullness of thought, directness, and simplicity of utterance are the fruits of this unction.

This unction is frequently confused with earnestness. He who has the divine unction will be earnest in the very spiritual nature of things, but there may be a vast deal of earnestness without the least mixture of unction.

Earnestness and unction look alike from some points of view. Earnestness can be easily and undetectably substituted for or confused with unction. It requires a spiritual eye and a spiritual taste to discriminate.

Earnestness may be sincere, serious, ardent, and persevering. It goes at a thing with good will, pursues it with perseverance, and urges it with ardor; it puts force into it. However, none of these forces are greater than the human. The man is in it-the whole man, with all that he has of will and heart, of brain and genius, of planning and working and talking. He has set himself to some purpose that has mastered him, and he pursues it to master it. There may be nothing of God in it. There may be a little of God in it because there is so much of man in it. In all his earnestness, he

may move along earthly paths, propelled only by human forces, with an altar built by human hands and its fire lit by human flames. It is said of a rather famous preacher of gifts, whose construction of Scripture was to his fancy or purpose, that he "grew very eloquent over his own exegesis." So men grow exceedingly earnest over their own plans or movements. Earnestness may be a disguise for selfishness.

What is unction? Preaching is defined as such by the indefinable. It is that which distinguishes and separates preaching from all mere human addresses. It is the divine in preaching. It honed the sermon for those in need. It distills as dew for those who need to be refreshed. It is well described as "a two-edged sword."

Of heavenly temper keen,
And double were the wounds it made
Wherever it glanced between.
'Twas death to sin; 'twas life
To all who mourned for sin
It kindled and it silenced strife,
Made war and peace within."

This unction comes to the preacher not in the study but in the closet. It is heaven's distillation in answer to prayer. It is the sweetest exhalation of the Holy Spirit. It impregnates, suffuses, softens, percolates, cuts, and soothes. It carries the Word like dynamite, like salt, like sugar; makes the Word a soother, an arraigner, a revealer, a searcher; makes the hearer a culprit or a saint; makes him weep like a child and live like a giant; opens his heart and his purse as gently yet as strongly as the spring opens the leaves. This unction is not the gift of genius. It is not found in the halls of learning. No amount of eloquence can woo it. No industry can win it. No prelatical hands can confer it. It is the gift of God-the signet and given to his own messengers. Heaven's knighthood

is bestowed upon those who have sought this anointed honor through many hours of tearful, wrestling prayer.

Earnestness is good and impressive; genius is gifted and great. Thought kindles and inspires, but it takes a diviner endowment, a more powerful energy than earnestness, genius, or thought, to break the chains of sin, to win estranged and depraved hearts to God, to repair the breaches, and to restore the Church to her old ways of purity and power. Nothing but this holy unction can do this.

Chapter 16

> *All the minister's efforts will be vanity or worse if he does not have unction. Unction must come down from heaven and spread a savor, a feeling, and a relish over his ministry. Among the other means of qualifying himself for his office, the Bible must hold the first place, and the last also must also be given to the Word of God and prayer. - Richard Cecil*

Unction in the Christian system is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that separates one from the world and qualifies one for God's work. This unction is the one divine enablement by which the preacher accomplishes the peculiar and saving ends of preaching. Without this unction, there are no true spiritual results accomplished; the results and forces of preaching do not rise above the results of unsanctified speech. Without unction, the former is as potent as the pulpit.

This divine unction on the preacher generates through the Word of God the spiritual results that flow from the gospel, and without this unction, these results are not secured. Many pleasant impressions may be made, but these all fall far below the level of gospel preaching. This unction can be feigned. There are many things that look like it, and there are many results that resemble its effects, but they are foreign to its results and to its nature. The fervor or softness excited by a pathetic or emotional sermon may look like the movements of divine unction, but they have no pungent, penetrating, heart-breaking force. No heart-healing balm is there in these surface, sympathetic, emotional movements; they are not radical, neither sin-searching nor sin-curing.

This divine unction is the distinguishing feature that separates true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting the truth. It backs and interpenetrates the revealed truth with all the force of

God. It illuminates the Word, broadens and enriches the intellect, and empowers it to grasp and apprehend it. It qualifies the preacher's heart and brings it to that condition of tenderness, purity, force, and light necessary to secure the highest results. This unction gives the preacher liberty and enlargement of thought and soul- freedom, fullness, and directness of utterance that can be secured by no other process.

Without the preacher's unction, the gospel has no more power to spread than any other system of truth. This is the seal of its divinity. Unction in the preacher puts God in the gospel. Without the unction, God is absent, and the gospel is left to the low and unsatisfactory forces that the ingenuity, interest, or talents of men can devise to enforce and project its doctrines.

It is in this element that the pulpit oftener fails than in any other. Just at this all-important point, it lapses. Learning it may have; brilliancy and eloquence may delight and charm; sensation or less offensive methods may bring the populace in crowds; mental power may impress and enforce truth with all its resources; but without this unction, each and all of these will be but as the fretful assault of the waters on Gibraltar. Spray and foam may cover and spangle, but the rocks are still there, unimpressed and unimpressible. The human heart can no more be swept of its hardness and sin by these human forces than these rocks can be swept away by the ocean's ceaseless flow.

This unction is the consecration force, and its presence is the continuous test of that consecration. It is this divine anointing on the preacher that secures his consecration to God and his work. Other forces and motives may call him to the work, but this is the only act of consecration. Only a separation from the world by the power of the Holy Spirit is a valid way to be set apart, according to God.

This divine unction, this heavenly anointing, is what the pulpit needs and must have. This divine and heavenly oil must soften and lubricate the entire man-heart, head, and spirit-until it powerfully separates him from all earthly, secular, worldly, selfish motives and aims and separates him from all pure and Godlike motives and aims.

Many congregations get upset and tense when the preacher has this "unction" on him or her. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, but no ruffle has been seen, no pain or pulsation felt. All is quiet as a graveyard. Another preacher comes, and this mysterious influence is on him; the letter of the Word has been fired by the Spirit, the throes of a mighty movement are felt, and it is the unction that pervades and stirs the conscience and breaks the heart. Unctionless preaching makes everything hard, dry, acrid, and dead.

This unction is not a memory or an era of the past; it is a present, realized, conscious fact. It belongs to the experience of the man as well as to his preaching. It is that which transforms him into the image of his divine Master, as well as that by which he declares the truths of Christ with power. It has so much power in the ministry as to make all else seem feeble and vain without it, and by its presence it atones for the absence of all other and feebler forces.

This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was first secured: by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, and by deeming all else loss and failure without it.

How and whence comes this unction? direct from God in answer to prayer. Only praying hearts are filled with this holy oil, and only praying lips are anointed with this divine unction.

Prayer, much prayer, is the cost of preaching unction; prayer, much prayer, is the only requirement for maintaining this unction. Without unceasing prayer, unction never comes to the preacher. Without perseverance in prayer, the unction, like unfinished manna, breeds worms.

Chapter 17

> *Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they are clergymen or laymen; such alone will shut the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer. - John Wesley*

The apostles recognized the importance and necessity of prayer in their ministry. They knew that their high commission as apostles, instead of relieving them from the necessity of prayer, committed them to it by a more urgent need, so that they were exceedingly jealous lest some other important work should exhaust their time and prevent their praying as they ought; so they appointed laymen to look after the delicate and engrossing duties of ministering to the poor, so that they (the apostles) might, unhindered, "give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Prayer is put first, and their relation to prayer is put most strongly- "giving themselves to it," making a business of it, surrendering themselves to prayer, and putting fervor, urgency, perseverance, and time into it.

"How holy and apostolic men gave themselves to the divine work of prayer!" "Night and day they prayed exceedingly," says Paul. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer," is the consensus of apostolic devotion. How these New Testament preachers laid themselves out in prayer for God's people! By praying, they bring God into their churches in full force! These holy apostles did not vainly fancy that they had met their high and solemn duties by faithfully delivering God's word, but their preaching was made to stick and tell by the ardor and insistence of their praying. Apostolic prayer was as taxing, toilsome, and imperative as apostolic preaching. They prayed mightily day and night to bring their people to the highest regions of faith and holiness. They prayed

mightier still to hold them to this high spiritual altitude. The preacher who has never learned in the school of Christ the high and divine art of intercession for his people will never learn the art of preaching, though homiletics be poured into him by the ton and though he be the most gifted genius in sermon-making and sermon delivery.

The prayers of apostolic, saintly leaders do much to make saints of those who are not apostles. If the Church leaders in later years had been as particular and fervent in praying for their people as the apostles were, the sad, dark times of worldliness and apostasy would not have marred the history, eclipsed the glory, and arrested the advance of the Church. Apostolic prayer makes apostolic saints and keeps apostolic times of purity and power in the Church.

What loftiness of soul, purity, and elevation of motive- unselfishness, self-sacrifice, exhausting toil, spiritual ardor, and divine tact are required to be an intercessor for men!

The preacher is to lay himself out in prayer for his people- not simply that they are saved but mightily. The apostles laid themselves out in prayer that their saints might be perfect, not that they should have a little relish for the things of God, but that they "might be filled with all the fullness of God." Paul did not rely on his apostolic preaching to secure this end, but "for this cause, he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's praying carried Paul's converts farther along the highway of sainthood than Paul's preaching did. Epaphras accomplished as much or more through prayer for the Colossian saints than by his preaching. He labored fervently, always in prayer for them, that "they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Preachers are preeminently God's leaders. They are primarily responsible for the condition of the Church. They shape its character and give tone and direction to its life.

Much in every way depends on these leaders. They shape the times and the institutions. The church is divine, and the treasure it holds is heavenly, but it bears the imprint of humanity. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and it smacks of the vessel. The Church of God makes, or is made by, its leaders. Whether it makes them or is made by them, it will be what its leaders are: spiritual if they are so, secular if they are, or conglomerate if they are. Israel's kings gave character to Israel's piety. A Church rarely revolts against or rises above the religion of its leaders. Men of holy might at the helm are signs of God's favor; disaster and weakness follow in the wake of feeble or worldly leaders. Israel had fallen low when God gave children to be their princes and babies to rule over them. No happy state is predicted by the prophets when children oppress God's people and women rule over them. Times of spiritual leadership are times of great spiritual prosperity for the Church.

Prayer is one of the eminent characteristics of strong spiritual leadership. Men of mighty prayer are men who can shape things. Their divine power has a conquering tread.

How can a man preach if he does not get his message fresh from God in the closet? How can he preach without having his faith quickened, his vision cleared, and his heart warmed by his communion with God? Alas, for the pulpit lips that are untouched by this closet flame. They will always be dry and unctionless, and divine truths will never come with power from such lips. As far as the real interests of religion are concerned, a pulpit without a closet will always be a barren thing.

A preacher can preach in a formal, entertaining, or learned way without praying, but there is a huge difference between that and sowing God's precious seed with holy hands and praying, weeping hearts.

A prayerless ministry is the undertaker for all of God's truth and for God's Church. He may have the most costly casket and the

most beautiful flowers, but it is a funeral, notwithstanding the charming array. A prayerless Christian will never learn God's truth, and a prayerless ministry will never be able to teach God's truth. Ages of millennial glory have been lost by a prayerless Church. The coming of our Lord has been postponed indefinitely by a prayerless Church. Hell has enlarged herself and filled her dire caves in the presence of the dead service of a prayerless Church.

The best and greatest offering is an offering of prayer. If the preachers of the twenty-first century will learn well the lesson of prayer and use fully the power of prayer, the millennium will come to its pinnacle before the century closes. "Pray without ceasing" is the trumpet call to the preachers of the twentieth century. If the twentieth century will get their texts, their thoughts, their words, and their sermons in their closets, the next century will find a new heaven and a new earth. The old sin-stained and sin-eclipsed heaven and earth will pass away under the power of a praying ministry.

Chapter 18

> *If some Christians who have been complaining about their ministers had said and acted less before men and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to God for their ministers-had, as it were, risen and stormed heaven with their humble, fervent, and incessant prayers for them-they would have been much more successful. - Jonathan Edwards*

Somehow the practice of praying in particular for the preacher has fallen into disuse or become discounted. People have sometimes said that the practice is an attack on the ministry because those who do it say in public that the ministry isn't working well. It might hurt the pride of learning and self-sufficiency, and a ministry that is so lazy as to let these things happen should hurt them and tell them to stop.

To the preacher, prayer is more than a duty or a privilege; it is a necessity. Air is not more necessary to the lungs than prayer is to the preacher.

It is absolutely necessary for the preacher to pray. It is an absolute necessity that the preacher be prayed for. These two propositions are wed into a union that ought never to know divorce: the preacher must pray, and the preacher must be prayed for. It will take all the praying he can do and all the praying he can get done to meet the fearful responsibilities and gain the greatest, truest success in his great work. The true preacher, next to the cultivation of the spirit and fact of prayer in himself in their intensest form, covets with great covetousness the prayers of God's people.

The more holy a person is, the more prayer he values; the more clearly he sees that God gives himself to those who pray and that the soul's longing, impassionate prayer for God is the measure of

God's revelation to the soul. Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be projected by a prayerless preacher. Gifts, talents, education, eloquence, and God's call cannot diminish the demand for prayer but only intensify the preacher's need to pray and be prayed for. The more the preacher's eyes are opened to his work's nature, responsibility, and difficulties, the more he will see. If he is a true preacher, the more he will feel the necessity of prayer-not only the increasing demand to pray himself but to call on others to help him with their prayers.

Paul is an illustration of this. If any man could project the gospel by dint of personal force, brain power, culture, personal grace, God's apostolic commission, or God's extraordinary call, that man was Paul. Paul is a prime example of a preacher who is devoted to prayer. Paul is a prime example of how a true apostolic preacher must rely on the prayers of others to ensure the success of his ministry. He asks, he covets, and he pleads in an impassioned way for the help of all God's saints. He knew that in the spiritual realm, as elsewhere, in union there is strength; that the concentration and aggregation of faith, desire, and prayer increased the volume of spiritual force until it became overwhelming and irresistible in its power. Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, make an ocean that defies resistance. So, with his clear and complete understanding of spiritual dynamics, Paul resolved to make his ministry as impressive, eternal, and irresistible as the ocean by gathering all the scattered units of prayer and precipitating them onto his ministry. Couldn't the answer to Paul's superiority in labors and results, as well as his impact on the Church and the world, be found in the fact that he was able to focus on himself and his ministry more in prayer than others? "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in prayer to God for me," he

wrote to his brethren in Rome. "Praying always in the Spirit for all the saints, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for me," he writes to the Ephesians. "Also praying for us, that God would open a door of utterance for us, that we may speak the mystery of Christ," he writes to the Colossians. "Brethren, pray for us," he says emphatically to the Thessalonians. Paul calls on the Corinthian Church to help him, saying, "You are also helping together by praying for us." This was to be part of their work. They were to lay themselves at the mercy of prayer. He, in an additional and closing charge to the Thessalonian Church about the importance and necessity of their prayers, says: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." He impresses the Philippians that all his trials and opposition can be made subservient to the spread of the gospel by the efficiency of their prayers for him. Philemon was to prepare lodging for him, for through Philemon's prayer, Paul was to be his guest.

Paul's attitude on this question illustrates his humility and his deep insight into the spiritual forces that project the gospel. More than this, it teaches a lesson for all times: if Paul was so dependent on the prayers of God's saints to give his ministry success, how much greater the necessity that the prayers of God's saints be centered on the ministry of today!

Paul did not feel that this urgent plea for prayer was to lower his dignity, lessen his influence, or depreciate his piety. What if it did? Let dignity go, let influence be destroyed, let his reputation be marred - he must have their prayers. As called, commissioned, and chief of the Apostles as he was, all his equipment was imperfect without the prayers of his people. He wrote letters everywhere, urging them to pray for him.

Do you pray for your preacher? Do you pray for him in secret? Public prayers are meaningless unless they are preceded or followed by private prayers. As Aaron and Hur were to Moses, the praying ones are to the preacher. They hold up his hands and decide the issue that is so fiercely raging around them.

The apostles' plea and purpose were to put the Church to prayer. They did not ignore the grace of cheerful giving. They were not ignorant of the place which religious activity and work occupied in the spiritual life, but not one nor all of these, in apostolic estimation or urgency, could at all compare in necessity and importance with prayer. The most sacred and urgent pleas were used, the most fervid exhortations were made, and the most comprehensive and arousing words were uttered to enforce the all-important obligation and necessity of prayer.

"Put the saints everywhere to praying" is the burden of the apostolic effort and the keynote of apostolic success. Jesus Christ had striven to do this in the days of his personal ministry. As he was moved by infinite compassion at the ripened fields of earth perishing for lack of laborers-and paused in his own praying-he tried to awaken the stupid sensibilities of his disciples to the duty of prayer as he charged them, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." And he told them a parable to show them that men should always pray and not faint.

Chapter 19

> *This constant rush of business and company could ruin my soul, if not my body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been dedicating habitually too little time to religious exercises such as private devotion, religious meditation, Scripture readings, etc. Hence, I am lean, cold, and hard. I had better allot two hours or an hour and a half daily; I have been keeping too late hours and hence have had only a hurried half hour in the morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions, the soul will grow lean. But all may be done through almighty prayer that I am ready to say- and why not? For it is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth that it is almighty, so pray, pray, pray! -William Wilberforce*

Our devotions are not measured by the clock, but time is of the essence. The ability to wait, stay, and press belongs essentially to our interaction with God. Hurry, everywhere unseeming and damaging, is so to an alarming extent in the great business of communion with God,

Short devotions are the bane of deep piety. Calmness, grasp, and strength are never the companions of hurry. Short devotions deplete spiritual vigor, arrest spiritual progress, sap spiritual foundations, and blight the root and bloom of spiritual life. They are a prolific source of sin, a sure sign of superficial piety; they deceive, blight, rot the seed, and deplete the soil.

It is true that Bible prayers in word and print are short, but the praying men of the Bible were with God through many a sweet and

holy wrestling hour. They won with few words but long waiting. The prayers Moses records may be short, but Moses prayed to God with fasting and mighty crying for forty days and nights.

The statement of Elijah's praying may be condensed to a few brief paragraphs, but doubtless Elijah, who "prayed," spent many hours of fiery struggle and lofty intercourse with God before he could, with assured boldness, say to Ahab, "There shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word." The verbal brief of Paul's prayers is short, but Paul "prayed night and day exceedingly." The "Lord's Prayer" is a divine epitome for infant lips, but the man Christ Jesus prayed many an all-night ere his work was done, and his all-night and long-sustained devotions gave to his work its finish and perfection, and to his character the fullness and glory of its divinity.

Spiritual work is taxing work, and men are loath to do it. True prayer necessitates an investment of serious attention and time, which flesh, and blood do not enjoy. Few people are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work passes well in the market. We can habituate ourselves to our beggarly praying until it looks good to us; at least it keeps up a decent form and quiets our conscience- the deadliest of opiates! We can slack off in our praying and not realize the peril until the foundations are gone. Hurried devotions result in shaky faith, shaky convictions, and dubious piety. Being small with God means being small for God. To cut short, the praying makes the whole religious character short, scrimpy, meager, and slovenly.

It takes time for the full flow of God to reach the spirit. Short devotions cut the pipe of God's full flow. It takes time in the secret places to receive God's full revelation. The image is marred by a lack of time and a rush.

Henry Martyn laments that "want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer through incessant sermon-making had

produced much strangeness between God and his soul." He judged that he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations and too little to private communion with God. He was deeply moved to set aside times for fasting and times for solemn prayer. Resulting from this, he records: "Was assisted this morning to pray for two hours." Said William Wilberforce, the peer of kings: "I must secure more time for private devotions." I have been living far too publicly for me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul; it grows lean and faint. "I have been keeping too late hours." Of a failure in Parliament, he says: "Let me record my grief and shame, all probably from private devotions having been contracted, and so God let me stumble." More solitude and earlier hours were his remedies.

More time and early hours for prayer would act like magic to revive and invigorate many a decaying spiritual life. More time and early hours for prayer would be manifest in holy living. A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult if our devotions were not so short and hurried. A Christly temper in its sweet and passionless fragrance would not be so alien and hopeless a heritage if our closet stay were lengthened and intensified. We live shabbily because we pray meanly. Plenty of time to feast in our closets will bring marrow and fatness to our lives. Our ability to stay with God in our closet measures our ability to stay with God outside the closet. Hasty closet visits are deceptive and defaulting. We are not only deluded by them, but we are losers because of them in many ways and in many rich legacies. Tarrying in the closet instructs and wins. We are taught by it, and the greatest victories are often the results of great waiting-waiting till words and plans are exhausted, and silent and patient waiting gains the crown. Jesus Christ asks with an affronted emphasis, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?"

To pray is the greatest thing we can do, and to do it well, there must be calmness, time, and deliberation; otherwise, it is degraded

into the littlest and meanest of things. True prayer has the largest results for good, and poor prayer has the least. We cannot do too much genuine prayer or too little sham prayer. We must rediscover the value of prayer and re-enter the school of prayer. There is nothing that takes more time to learn. And suppose we would learn wondrous art. In that case, we must not give a fragment here and there-"A little talk with Jesus," as the tiny saintlets sing-but we must demand and hold with an iron grasp the best hours of the day for God and prayer, or there will be no praying worth the name.

This, however, is not a day of prayer. There are few men who pray. Preachers and priests defame prayer. In these days of hurry and bustle, of electricity and steam, men will not take time to pray. There are preachers who "say prayers" on a regular or special occasion as part of their program, but who "stirs himself up to take hold of God?" Who prays as Jacob prayed until he is crowned as a prevailing, princely intercessor? Who prayed as Elijah prayed until all the locked-up forces of nature were unsealed and a famine-stricken land bloomed as the garden of God? Who prayed as Jesus Christ prayed as out upon the mountain, he "continued all night in prayer to God?" The apostles "gave themselves to prayer"-the most difficult thing to get men or preachers to do. There are laypeople who will give their money-some of them in rich abundance-but they will not "give themselves" to prayer, without which their money is but a curse. There are plenty of preachers who will preach and deliver great and eloquent addresses on the need for revival and the spread of the kingdom of God, but few there are who will do that, without which all preaching and organizing are worse than vain - pray. It is out of date, almost a lost art, and the greatest benefactor this age could have been the man who will bring the preachers and the Church back to prayer.

Chapter 20

> *I judge that my prayer is more powerful than the devil himself; if it were, otherwise, Luther would have fared differently long before this. Yet men will not see and acknowledge the great wonders or miracles God works on my behalf. If I don't pray even once a day, I'll lose a lot of my faith fire - Martin Luther.*

Before Pentecost, the apostles could only catch glimpses of the importance of prayer. But the Spirit's coming and filling on Pentecost elevated prayer to its vital and all-commanding position in the gospel of Christ. The call now to prayer for every saint is the Spirit's loudest and most exigent call. Sainthood's piety is made, refined, and perfected by prayer. When the saints are not at their prayers early, late, and long, the gospel moves at a slow and timid pace.

Where are the Christly leaders who can teach the modern saints how to pray and then put them to it? Do we know we are raising up a prayerless set of saints? Where are the apostolic leaders who can get God's people praying? Let them come to the front and do the work, and it will be the greatest work that can be done. An increase in educational facilities and a great increase in financial resources will be the direst curse to religion if they are not sanctified by more and better praying than we are doing. More praying will not come as a matter of course. If we are not careful, the campaign for the twenty-first century fund will obstruct our prayers. Nothing but a specific effort from a praying leadership will avail. The chief ones must lead the apostolic effort to radiate the vital importance and fact of prayer in the heart and life of the Church. Only praying leaders can have praying followers. Praying apostles will beget praying saints. A praying pulpit will beget praying pews. We do need somebody who can set the saints to this business of praying.

We are not a generation of praying saints. Non praying saints are a beggarly gang of saints who have neither the ardor, beauty, nor power of saints. Who will restore this breach? The most significant will be reformers and apostles who can inspire the church to pray.

We believe that the greatest need of the Church in this and all ages is men of such commanding faith, unsullied holiness, marked spiritual vigor, and consuming zeal that their prayers, faith, lives, and ministry will be of such a radical and aggressive nature as to work spiritual revolutions that will form eras in individual and church life.

We do not mean men who get up sensational stirs by novel devices, nor those who are attracted by a pleasing entertainment, but men who can stir things up and work revolutions by the preaching of God's Word and by the power of the Holy Ghost, revolutions that change the whole current of things.

Natural ability and educational advantages are not factors in this matter, but faith, prayer, the power of thorough consecration, self-littleness, an absolute loss of oneself in God's glory, and an ever-present and insatiable yearning for and seeking after all the fullness of God is. These men can set the Church ablaze for God-not in a noisy, showy way but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves everything for God.

God can work wonders if he can find a suitable man. Men can work wonders if they can get God to lead them. The full endowment of the spirit that turned the world upside down would be eminently useful in these latter days. Men who can stir things mightily for God, whose spiritual revolutions change the whole aspect of things, are the universal need of the Church.

The Church has never been without these men; they adorn its history; they are the standing miracles of the divinity of the Church; their example and history are an unfailing inspiration and

blessing. An increase in their number and power should be our prayer.

That which has been done in spiritual matters can be done again and better. This was Christ's view. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he also do; and greater works than these shall he do," he said. The past has not exhausted the possibilities or the demands for doing great things for God. The Church that is dependent on its history for its miracles of power and grace is a fallen Church.

God seeks to elect men-men who have undergone a severe crucifixion-a bankruptcy that has so completely ruined themselves and the world that there is no hope or desire for recovery-men who, because of this insolvency and crucifixion, have turned toward God with perfect hearts.

Let us pray ardently that God's promise to answer prayer may be more than realized.